

*I think the environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defense of our resources is just as important as defense abroad. Otherwise what is there to defend?*

—Robert Redford

There are many agencies of the federal and state government that manage large acreages of land in Virginia for purposes other than outdoor recreation, but which have the potential to meet some public recreation needs.

## Findings

- Military reservations have had to tighten security since Sept. 11, 2001, but still provide some recreational opportunities for the public.
- The Base Realignment and Closing Commission (BRAC) has made recommendations that will affect the gain or loss of personnel located at existing military facilities in Virginia. When a military facility closes, there may be opportunities for its conversion to parks and recreation uses or its function as open space. Historic military bases offer an added cultural attribute in evaluating future options for military lands closed through BRAC. On the other hand, when military facilities gain personnel, the surrounding communities need to assess the local and regional ability to provide adequate outdoor recreation beyond what is located at the military facility.
- Military bases help meet the need for hunting areas in eastern areas of the state.
- Many state colleges and universities own large acreages of lands not presently being used for educational or research purposes.
- The Department of Corrections manages lands throughout Virginia that may have utility for public recreational use where security is not an issue.
- Greater impetus should be given to Public Law 90-465, which authorizes the Secretary of Defense to carry out a program for the "development, enhancement, operation and maintenance of public outdoor recreation resources at military reservations." This would not only help meet outdoor recreational needs of the general public, but also would ensure that military personnel and dependents are offered adequate opportunities. In this regard, the National Park Service should assume the lead coordinating role in developing agreements between the Department of Defense and the Commonwealth of Virginia which would increase the availability of military lands for public outdoor recreational use.
- The National Park Service should coordinate with the Department of Defense to develop a process to provide accurate site information. This should ensure that the state has usable property descriptions and location maps accompanying federal surplus property notifications. All involved state agencies should be notified of surplus property title transfers.
- The Tennessee Valley Authority should continue to assist with providing access to major streams within the Virginia portion of the Tennessee River watershed.
- Any foreclosed properties offered for public sale should be evaluated for their recreational and open space opportunities and included in local, regional and state programs for appropriate management.
- The Department of General Services (DGS) should consider compatible recreational activities as a potential use for surplus or underutilized public lands.
- Before public selling or auctioning real estate, DGS should check with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the Department of Forestry, and local parks and recreation departments to determine if the parcel(s) have potential for present or future recreational use.
- DCR should work with all state land managers who have underutilized lands to evaluate the recreational potential of these lands.

## Recommendations

- All surplus land resulting from base closures or other government reductions needs careful evaluation to determine possible recreational or open space opportunities for the citizens of Virginia. Special consideration should be given to lands that afford access to the state's waters, such as Fort Monroe.

## Other Federal and State Lands

- DCR should work with all state land managers to conduct natural resources inventories on state-owned lands for better management and sustainability.
- Community colleges have strong ties with the local communities within which they are located. Often, this is an excellent opportunity to create a partnership between the community college and the locality to develop unused lands for compatible recreational facilities to benefit both the college and the locality. Local parks and recreation directors should explore the feasibility of joint use of community college open space and undeveloped lands, and community colleges should prepare their master plans with shared use of outdoor facilities in mind.

### Federal properties

In addition to national forests, parks and wildlife refuges, the federal government manages more than 426,000 acres of land and water in the Commonwealth. Although most of these areas are managed primarily for military purposes, they also provide important recreational opportunities for military personnel and the general public. While the events of September 11, 2001, changed the way military bases are managed for use for non-military purposes, most bases still offer a range of recreational opportunities that help to meet public outdoor recreation demand.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates Flannagan, Kerr, and Philpott reservoirs. These reser-

voirs comprise a total 99,000 acres of land and water. Traditionally, Corps projects such as these were designed solely for hydro-electric production, navigation or flood control. However, broadened legislative authority now requires full consideration of multiple-purpose developments like recreation, fish and wildlife conservation, hydroelectric power, water supply, and the preservation and enhancement of natural beauty. In 1982, the Corps gave operational responsibility for two of its reservoirs located in national forests to the USDA Forest Service. They were North Fork of the Pound Lake and Lake Moomaw.

The U.S. Army has nine installations in Virginia, encompassing more than 188,000 acres. Fort A.P. Hill and Fort Pickett, the two largest posts, have a combined acreage of 154,000. These two installations are primarily used for reserve training; however, recreational facilities could be available to surrounding communities when not being used for troop recreational activities or training. In addition, some of the land is open to public hunting by special permit. Both installations have small lakes and ponds that are open to the public when the military mission of the post does not require their closure. Other army installations in the Commonwealth encompass almost 34,000 acres, of which nearly 1,000 are designated for outdoor recreational use by military personnel, dependents and guests. In 1993, Fort Belvoir constructed a major recreational complex with campground, marina, lodge and other recreational facilities. This complex has become a hub for thousands of military families



Lake Philpott. Photo by USACOE.



*Fort Monroe in Hampton Roads.*

and retirees visiting the Northern Virginia area and the nation's capital. With the re-alignment of military forces in Northern Virginia, another 2,400 military personnel and their families will be moving to Fort Belvoir. It is important that accommodations for the new arrivals include ample open space and recreational facilities.

Army installations in Tidewater include Forts Eustis, Monroe and Story. Each provides a variety of recreational facilities including beach use and boating access facilities to the ocean or tidal rivers. In particular, Fort Story provides a beach and lodging facilities for military families and makes a section of its beaches available to the general public. A large portion of Fort Story was acquired from the state prior to World War II and should be returned. Ft. Monroe is being closed as a military base, and its waterfront location makes it a great opportunity for the public to gain water access to the Chesapeake Bay.

The U.S. Navy also has nine installations in Virginia, totaling about 48,000 acres. Of this, more than 200 acres contain outdoor recreational facilities. Naval bases along the coast have significant quantities of high quality beach, some of which may be appropriate for public recreational use. Agreements with local governments would facilitate public use and increase the supply of public beach. Naval bases are continually upgrading their on-base recreational resources to meet the needs of base personnel and their families, retirees and visitors from other services or bases.

The U.S. Marine Corps operates the Quantico Marine Corps Base in Prince William County. Base policy offers a percentage of all hunting and fishing permits on the 54,000 acres to the general public. This site provides the closest available hunting lands to many residents of the heavily populated Northern Virginia area.

The remaining military installations in Virginia consist of an Air Force base, an Air Force station, a National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) facility and eight Coast Guard stations. These installations together contain 5,700 acres, 150 of which are devoted to outdoor recreational facilities.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) administers 2,000 acres of water and about 40 acres of recreational land on the Virginia portion of the South Holston Reservoir. Additionally, TVA coordinates with DGIF to improve public access to rivers in Southwestern Virginia that are within the Tennessee Valley watershed.

### State properties

Approximately 750,000 acres of land throughout the Commonwealth belongs to state agencies and institutions. The vast majority of these resources are committed to specific public functions. However, because some state lands are considered underutilized and possibly surplus, a significant opportunity exists to expand the use of these areas for their recreational and open space potential. Multiple use is an alternative that has been recommended to obtain additional public benefit from these properties.

As stated previously, the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* indicated that Virginians desire more recreational areas and facilities. There are many instances where existing state-owned lands currently used for other purposes might also provide some recreation. More efficient use could be made of these properties by encouraging compatible recreational developments. All previous *VOPs* have advocated the multiple use of public lands as a wise and beneficial use of the resources of the Commonwealth.

DGS has legislative responsibility to coordinate the review and disposition of state-owned properties. Over the past few years, DGS has developed maps and descriptions of the real property owned by 17 land managing agencies and institutions. The almost 350,000 acres of property inventoried, excluding highway department rights-of-way and state-owned subaqueous lands, host a range of functions including conservation, recreation, education, health and corrections. Of these, 15,000 acres were identified by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, the Department of Forestry and DGS, as resources with potential for future multiple use, including compatible recreation. It should be pointed out that not all land considered underutilized or potentially surplus is suitable for public recreation.